

Valentin Inzko, EU Special Representative and High Representative in BiH: “Europe should be Bosnianized”

In conversation with Radio Free Europe, High Representative Valentin Inzko spoke about the need to extend the mandate of foreign judges and prosecutors in our country, and about the possibility of reaching agreement with the European Union on a visa-free regime, and about the role of the international community.

Asked about the fact that BiH is in many areas lagging behind neighboring countries, and the feeling that the country is in a vicious circle, Inzko said that some issues that were topical a year ago still haven’t been resolved.

“Regarding Brcko (where we want to close the circle), some issues have not been resolved for nine years. The question now is whether I will impose some solutions or not. Maybe I will decide in technical terms, (but) I do not want to exert political influence. Nine years is a period in which I would be ashamed of not doing something”, Inzko remarked.

He believes that foreign judges are welcome in BiH.

“I think it is good that they finish the job they started, but for the future I think it is better that Bosnians themselves take everything into their hands”, he said. “And whether foreign judges and prosecutors will stay, we will see on September 16 when the House of Representatives of the State Parliament is scheduled to vote. Maybe a miracle will happen there, don’t you think?“

Asked if he believes that BiH politicians will finally sit down and agree on all the important issues, Inzko answered: “Maybe a new generation of politicians will work on some issues and deal with them a little differently... Maybe a new generation of politicians will do things and reach agreement a little differently. We saw this with regard to the visa regime, when in a single moment they accepted four or five laws in urgent procedure, and I think they can also do it in some other areas. With regard to visas, it is already late, it is ten past twelve now, but still BiH could,

in urgent procedure, do what is expected and secure a visa-free regime for its citizens, at least from July next year."

Inzko points out that politicians are friendly when they talk to one another but "in public they present irreconcilable positions".

"Politicians could use those mutual contacts in order to resolve problems, and I believe that they would also have a better rating among voters if they did that. Voters do not ask any more whether the politician is Bosniak, Serb, or Croat, but what he has done for citizens", says this politician who supports the premise that all children in BiH should go to school together, and that they should not be divided into one or another or a third group.

Finally, Inzko offered an idea for improving the image of BiH in the world.

"For BiH to be recognized for its qualities. That there should no longer be this association in the world – ah, Bosnia again, they are probably asking for money or there's another problem or some inter-Entity or inter-ethnic affair, or some conflict or tension. Instead we should hear – Bosnia and Herzegovina means culture, since this country is rich in culture, or: Bosnia, yes, that means Boris Nemsic, one of the best managers in Europe, or Ivica Osim, one of the best coaches in Europe", Inzko told Radio Free Europe.

"I also have some plans for tourism; people should come to Bosnia and Herzegovina for its beauty, for the three cultures, they should go, let's say, from Bascarsija, through Mostar, Buna, Medjugorje, Trebinje all the way to Dalmatia. Those tourists will go home with a completely different picture of BiH; of BiH as a country of sportsmen and natural beauty. For me, the Balkans in general should change its image: it should be the Balkans as a cultural area. I always repeat that Bosnia and Herzegovina should be Europeanized, and Europe should also be Bosnianized", the High Representative concluded.

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